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SUBJECT: OPPOSITION YOUTH ACTIVIST RECEIVES FINE

#### Solovyova Fined USD 814 for Malady Front Activity

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1. (SBU) Polotsk City Court fined 19-year-old Malady Front activist Yekaterina Solovyova BYR 1,750,000 (USD 814) April 8 for violating Article 193 of the Criminal Code of Belarus -- Activity on Behalf of an Unregistered Organization. Her sentence was significantly less than the BYR 7,000,000 (USD 3256) sought by the prosecution or the maximum sentence of two years of imprisonment permissible under the code. Solovyova still faces a charge of destruction of state property, for allegedly removing a Belarusian flag from Prosecutor's Office building and tying it to the door.

2. (SBU) A/DCM observed most of the evidentiary portion of the trial in Polotsk. The few prosecution witnesses who testified -- two fellow students and a dormitory house mother -- seemed less than willing to provide evidence against Solovyova, even though they may have done so in past private testimony to police. Oddly, the prosecution paid significant attention to the presence of opposition newspapers in Solovyova's dormitory room, including even registered independent papers like "Novy Chas."

#### Solovyova Supporters Fined

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3. (SBU) A/DCM was the only foreign diplomat present, but opposition political leaders who came to the courthouse to support Solovyova included former UDF presidential candidate and For Freedom Movement leader Aleksandr Milinkevich, Belarusian Christian Democracy leader and former political prisoner Pavel Sevarinets, former Acting Chair of Malady Front Dmitriy Fedaruk and Belarusian Social Democratic Party-Narodnaya Gramada leader and former political prisoner Nikolay Statkevich. Solovyova's trial was held in a tiny court room with a gallery seating capacity of roughly twenty, so many of her supporters remained on the street outside the courthouse. According to press reports, two such supporters Aleksey Yanushevskiy and Lyudmila Atakulova were fined BYR 105,000 (USD 49) and BYR 1,225,000 (USD 570) respectively for leading an illegal demonstration.

#### Comment

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4. (SBU) The content of the "evidence" and questioning in this trial left no doubt that Solovyova was punished for her political activity and beliefs. The regime's brutal repression of the opposition of late -- including beatings on March 25 -- led us to fear that Solovyova might do time on this charge. In the end, the stiff fine she received is more in line with standard regime practice in such cases.

Comment Cont'd

15. (SBU) As a separate matter, this was the first test case of travel requirements recently imposed by the MFA: the Embassy provided full information by diplomatic note more than 24 hours in advance, including the purpose of the travel, the route to be taken, the name of the diplomat who would be traveling, and the license plate number of the Embassy car. Vitebsk region authorities initially wrote to the Embassy to say that travel to the trial would be "inexpedient", but the MFA confirmed to Charge April 7 that the GOB had no objections to the trip, and local authorities did not prevent it from taking place.

MOORE  
LEADER